

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

October 9, 2008

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776  
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**COOL Foods in Your Grocery Cart?**

We are getting closer and closer to having COOL in our grocery carts. Do you know what COOL means? Should you care? Some people care a whole lot about knowing where their food is coming from. If you are one of them, then COOL is for you.

COOL stands for Country Of Origin Labeling. In other words, the label has to tell you where the food came from. In 2002 Congress mandated that labels on certain foods should tell us where it came from. Because it takes a long time to develop the methods to trace a food's travels, it wasn't until 2005 that the first part of the rule took effect. That was when fish and shellfish had to be labeled with their country of origin.

Now the second part is coming. Retailers must start now and have until the end of March 2009 to put COOL, or Country Of Origin Labels, on the rest of the covered foods. Those food that now have to be labeled are: Fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables; Muscle cuts and Ground meat from beef, pork, lamb, goat and chicken; Peanuts, pecans and macadamia nuts; Ginseng; and still all fish and shellfish.

Not every food must be labeled. Restaurants, delis, cafeterias and other food service locations do not have to label the source of their foods. Fish markets, butcher shops and other small stores that sell less than \$230,000 of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables do not have to use the labels. And foods that contain one of the covered foods as an ingredient don't have to use COOL labels. So, don't expect to see labels on a frozen dinner that the pork came from one country, the carrots from another and

the green beans from somewhere else.

Only unprocessed foods must have the COOL labeling. Marinated meat, such as a teriyaki-flavored pork loin, or a breaded product such as chicken tenders are not covered by this new rule since they are considered processed. Cooked meats, whether it is roasted, grilled, broiled or steamed, are not covered. Smoked, cured or fermented meats such as bacon or sausage will not be covered either. Extruded meats such as surimi, the imitation crab products are also exempt from the labeling. And if other ingredients are added to the food, such as bags of mixed salad greens or fruit cocktail cups, then the labels are not required. However, many will be still labeled to meet other laws and regulations, or because the producer chooses to do so.

On unprocessed foods, you can expect to start seeing labels in the grocery store soon. But because of the complexity of our food delivery systems, they might not all be as simple as “Grown in Mexico”. What do they do about a cow that was raised in the US but shipped to Mexico to be slaughtered? Or hogs that were raised in Mexico, shipped to the US for finishing then slaughtered in Canada? Meat from animals like these could have labels that say “Product of US, Mexico and Canada.” So while we will know that the animal spent time in those countries, we won’t be able to tell from the label how long it was there, how old it was while it was there, or what was done to it while it was in each country.

Fruits or vegetables grown completely in one state can say “Product of Florida” instead of “Product of the USA”. Meats from animals, fish and shellfish can not use a state label. The label could be a label right on the package. Or it could be a poster or sign where you buy it. The label has to be in words. Just a picture of the flag of a

country is not enough. And the words have to be big enough to see and read and be easily visible on the package.

Here's a recipe that's quick to prepare and stick in the oven. Its larger size makes it a great choice for a pot luck supper at the church, or a family get-together on the weekend. You can adjust the amount of chiles, leave them out, or add a few splashes of hot sauce to the filling before baking depending on how hot you like it.

### Tater Tot Topped Casserole

2 pounds lean ground beef	1 large onion, chopped
2 15-oz cans chili beans	1 12-oz can diced tomatoes
1 11-oz can whole kernel corn, drained	1 32-oz pkg frozen Tater Tots®
8-oz pkg reduced fat shredded Colby and Monterey Jack cheese blend	
1/4 C pickled sliced jalapeño peppers, or 2 fresh jalapeños, sliced (optional)	

Preheat to 350°. Brown beef and onion in large skillet over medium-high heat until beef is brown and onion is tender. Drain off grease. Stir in beans, tomatoes and corn.

Spoon into a greased 9 x 13 inch baking pan. Sprinkle Tater Tots® over top. Bake 1 hr until potatoes are golden brown. Sprinkle with peppers. Serve hot. Serves 8 - 10.

*Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.*

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING